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Research Brief

Oxbridge Admissions

Oxford and Cambridge universities have a combined reputation that needs little introduction. For centuries they have been seen as the pinnacle of academic study and, as Sutton Trust research has shown, their alumni have gone on to hold the top positions in our country's networks of power – in law,¹ business² and politics³ and the media. Getting a degree from Oxbridge is often seen as a prerequisite to entering the upper echelons of society.

It is no surprise that places to study at these two universities are in high demand – with roughly five applications per place. And this is why the question of who gets into Oxbridge is of so much interest. This research brief aims to unpick that question of who gets those places, but also explores how these two elite institutions pick the best and brightest. The processes both universities go through to select their applicants can vary widely, and that there is significant complexity in the system.

Previous Sutton Trust work has found that over 60% of teachers underestimate the percentage of students from state schools on undergraduate courses at Oxbridge, with a quarter saying fewer than 20% of students come from the state sector (the actual figure is around 60%).¹ The same survey found that over 40% of teachers in state secondary schools say they would rarely or

never advise academically-gifted pupils to apply to Oxbridge.

Of course, this fits into a broader national context of university admissions. Ensuring fair access to higher education has been a public aim of successive governments. However, there has been significantly more interest since the increase in the tuition fee cap in England to £9,000 in 2012.

Our focus is on admissions for UK students for undergraduate study only. There are obviously other admissions and access issues specific to mature students, those from overseas and postgraduates, none of which are mutually exclusive, which require a separate analysis. It is worth noting that the number of UK undergraduates admitted to Oxford and Cambridge has been falling in recent years – between 2005/6 and 2013/14 numbers fell from 10,839 to 9,278. A similar trend is seen at Cambridge – where the number of places dropped from 10,014 to 9,598 over the same period.¹⁸

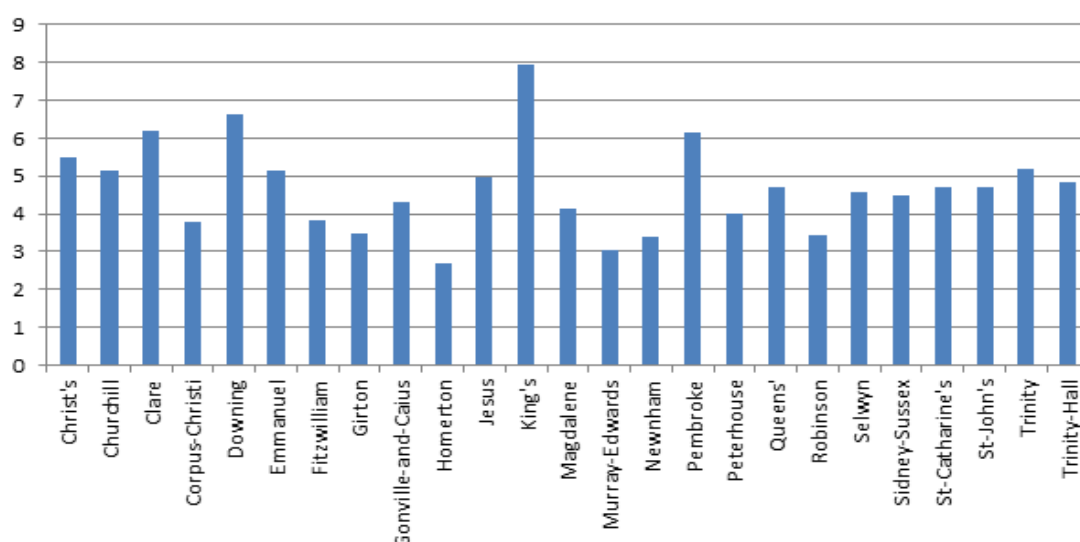
Admission statistics

Overall

Undergraduate courses at Oxford and Cambridge are highly over-subscribed. This inevitably creates a challenge for admissions tutors – how to choose the best and brightest? Both universities therefore have a selection process that goes beyond the norm for most universities and higher education courses in the UK.

Both universities have similar applications processes, with some important differences, and so they go to great lengths to explain the process on their websites. First, applicants cannot apply to both universities which, in the UK, is unique to Oxbridge and is not seen at all at Ivy League universities in the United States, for example. There are restrictions placed on the number of applications allowed for particular subjects, regardless of institution – such as medicine and veterinary medicine – but no similar institutional restrictions. Once an applicant has decided to apply to

Fig 1: Cambridge University –applicants per acceptance, by college (Average of 2012, 2013 and 2014)⁵



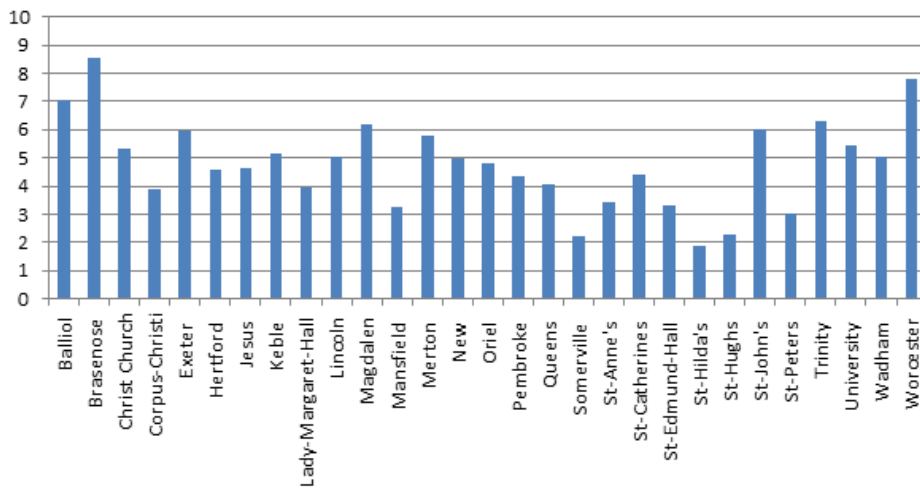


Fig 2: Oxford University - applicants per acceptance, by college (Average of 2011, 2012 and 2013)⁶

a college other than their first choice,⁴ with a similar proportion at Cambridge.

At Oxford, the pool system takes place while students are in Oxford for their interview, and so applicants may be seen by two or three colleges over a few days. Cambridge has a pool system that takes place after the initial round of interviews, when the first offers has been made, which means that many 'pooled' applicants are invited back to Cambridge for a second interview at another college, usually after the Christmas break.

Figures 1 and 2 below show the number of applicants per place at each college. There are significant differences between each of them, something the pooling system is intended to mitigate.

As well as differences between colleges, some subjects are more over-subscribed than others. For example, at Cambridge in 2014, offers were made to 13% of economics applicants, compared to 48% for Classics.⁷

Backgrounds

We will look at the backgrounds of applicants and those admitted to Oxbridge in three ways – by neighbourhood, free school meals and school type. Each of these on its own represents just one way of looking at who gains admission to Oxbridge, but nevertheless the trends are worth noting. In particular, we are interested in UK applicants to undergraduate courses. The main criterion for admission to either university is

one of the universities, both require applicants to complete the standard UCAS application form.

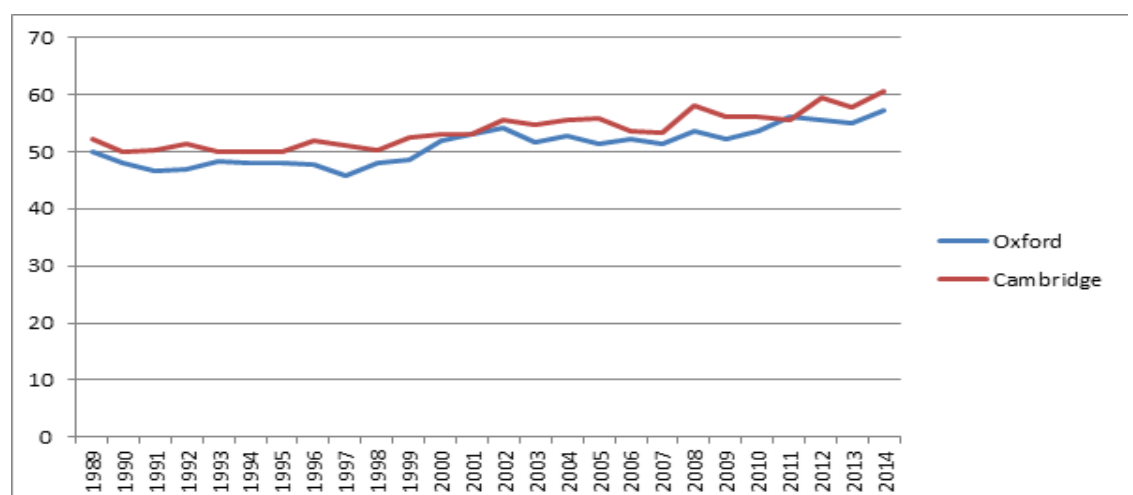
Oxford and Cambridge are both 'collegiate' universities, in that they are composed of many individual bodies that will provide a significant proportion of a student's teaching, their accommodation, and perhaps some financial support. Most colleges offer most subjects, but there are some which have certain reputations, perhaps for providing particularly generous financial assistance to students or for achieving very well academically (as measured in the Norrington Table for Oxford and Tompkins Table for Cambridge). Students must gain a place at a college to study at the university.

The role of university subject departments in the selection process varies between the two universities. At Oxford, a central 'screening' process by subject takes place to determine which applicants are invited to interview. At Cambridge, individual colleges have more autonomy, but there is also intensive moderation between colleges and subjects, particularly when it comes to the Pool, which is described in more detail later. Cambridge interviews almost all of its applicants, whereas Oxford interviews a

smaller proportion. Oxford University has suggested that "in many cases final decisions about who to accept will be taken by departments".

However, both universities also have a 'pool' system, where applicants to colleges that are over-subscribed with well-qualified applicants will be considered by other colleges. The pool systems are intended to ensure that whilst an applicant's chances of getting into a specific college vary in any given year, the chances of getting into the university are equal for those who are equally qualified. There are agreed criteria based on academic performance that make pooling compulsory in the event that a college cannot make an offer to highly qualified applicants. This is intended to ensure equity of students between colleges, but also to ensure that no one is disadvantaged based on their initial college choice. At Oxford, around 27% of successful candidates for 2014 entry are at

Fig 3: Percentage of maintained school applicants admitted as a proportion of all UK applicants from maintained and independent schools¹⁰



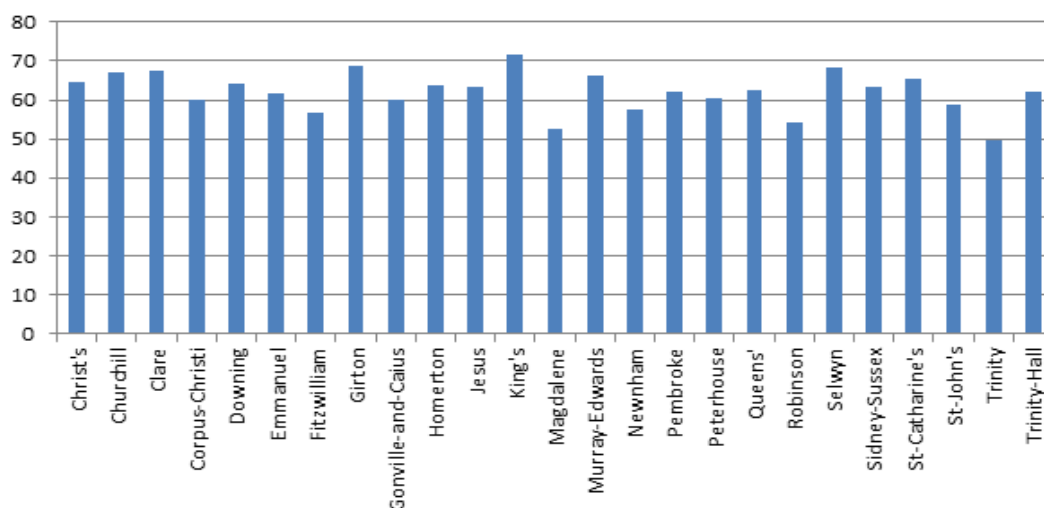


Fig 4: UK state school admissions, as a percentage of all UK admissions, by Cambridge College (Average of 2012-2014)

academic ability. Previous Sutton Trust research has documented the challenges in schools ensuring bright students from less advantaged backgrounds study the right subjects at A-level and make good progress through secondary school.⁸

1. School type

The first way to look at Oxbridge admissions is by the school type of its applicants and admitted students. There is always a concern that students from the wealthiest families, who can afford access to elite independent schools and their networks, could have an unfair advantage in their access to prestigious universities, and the positions of power to which they pave the way. Previous research has shown that some 30% of comprehensive schools have at most one or two students progressing to the prestigious 24 Russell Group universities, with just 40 schools and colleges provided about a quarter of all Oxbridge entrants.⁸

Three prestigious private schools and two elite sixth form colleges produced as many entrants to Oxford and Cambridge as 1800 state schools and colleges across England, in 2011-12.¹⁰ In 2012/13 over 1600 schools sent no pupils to Oxbridge.¹⁹ Over time, the proportion of students from state schools at both Oxford and Cambridge has increased, with Cambridge tending to have a higher proportion in most years. However, given that just 7%

of young people in the UK attend an independent school, and 14% of sixth formers are at independent schools, there is still a significant disparity in their success at gaining a place at Oxbridge. Independent school students make up 33% of the population achieving 3As at A-level,⁹ which is one of the reasons both universities have a higher-than expected proportion of independently-schooled students. The proportion achieving A*A*A (the average Cambridge student's profile) is likely to be higher still. Oxford also suggests that subject choice plays a significant role – on average between 2012 and 2014, 35% of state school applications were for the most over-subscribed subjects, compared to 30% of independent school applicants. State school applicants are also less likely to apply for the least subscribed subjects. Yet, while this will reflect differential

academic attainment to a significant extent, there are still significant differences in the distribution of applicants by school type and the pool system across colleges.

In 2014, the proportion of successful Cambridge applicants from the UK educated in the state sector increased from 51% in 1997 to 62.2%, and 37.8% came from independent schools. At

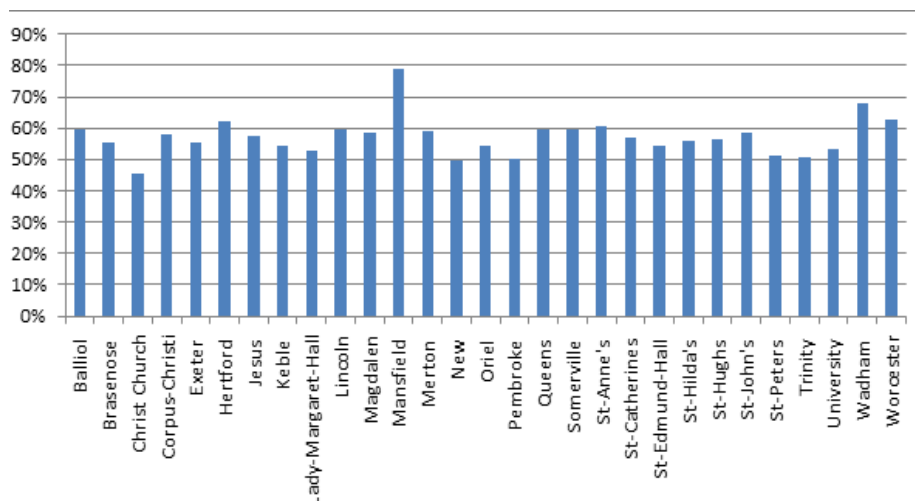
Oxford, 56.3% of those accepted were from state schools up from 47% in 1997, when access and outreach activities started to become more prevalent.

Over the three years from 2012-2014, one in five of the state school students admitted to Oxford was from a grammar school; about 5% of school children in the UK are in grammars.¹¹

The fact that Oxford and Cambridge are collegiate is reflected in differences in the application and subsequent acceptance rates to particular colleges.

Figs 4 and 5 show the proportions of UK state school students admitted to each college, averaged across 2012-2014. There are stark differences between Oxford colleges – from a high of 79% at Mansfield, to a low of just 46% at Christ Church. Similarly, at Cambridge there are also large differences between colleges – from 71% at King's to 49% at Trinity.

Fig 5: UK state school admissions, as a percentage of all UK admissions, by Oxford College, (Average of 2012- 2014).



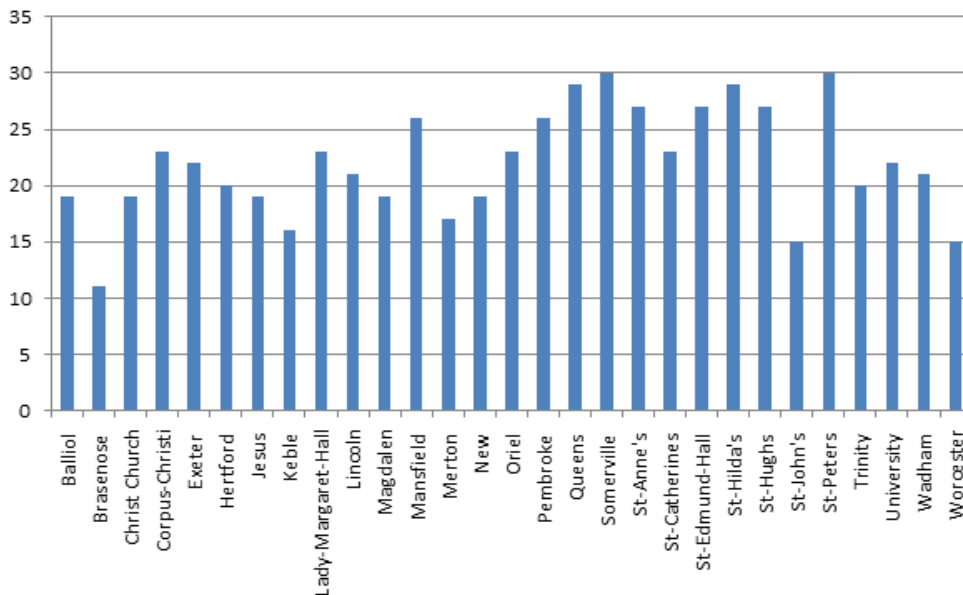


Fig 6: UK state school acceptance rate, by Oxford College, 2012-2014, UK applicants (excluding Permanent Private Halls)

It is worth noting that these figures will, in part, reflect the fact that some colleges are significantly more over-subscribed with well-qualified applicants than others and application patterns outside of the universities' control. The subject mix at some colleges will also play a part. Nevertheless, the odds of getting into different colleges vary significantly.

Figures 6 and 7 above show that there are also significant differences for applicants from different school types at different colleges, in the extent to which they are admitted. For example, over 50% of state school applicants at Murray-Edwards (Cambridge) received offers, compared to just 17% at King's. At Oxford there are also large differences between colleges – at Brasenose College, just 11% of state school applicants receive a place, compared to 30% at St Peter's. Overall, at Oxford between 2012 and 2014, 35% of state school applications were for the most over-subscribed subjects, compared to 30% of independent school applicants. State school applicants are also less likely to apply for the least subscribed subjects.

2. Free school meals and household income

The Department for Education has an 'impact' measure, based on its destination data which looks at the number of children on Free School Meals who go on to Oxbridge. FSM is a common measure of disadvantage, used in education in the UK. In 2012/13 there were just 50 FSM students from state schools who were admitted to Oxbridge, which is similar to previous years. They account for 15% of the school population, but less than 1% of Oxbridge admissions. However, they have around 10% of children from households earning below £16,000 a year, the cut off point for free school meals, while the proportion of

students from families earning £42,600 or more is 76% at Oxford, whereas less than two-fifths of two person households with children earn above this level.

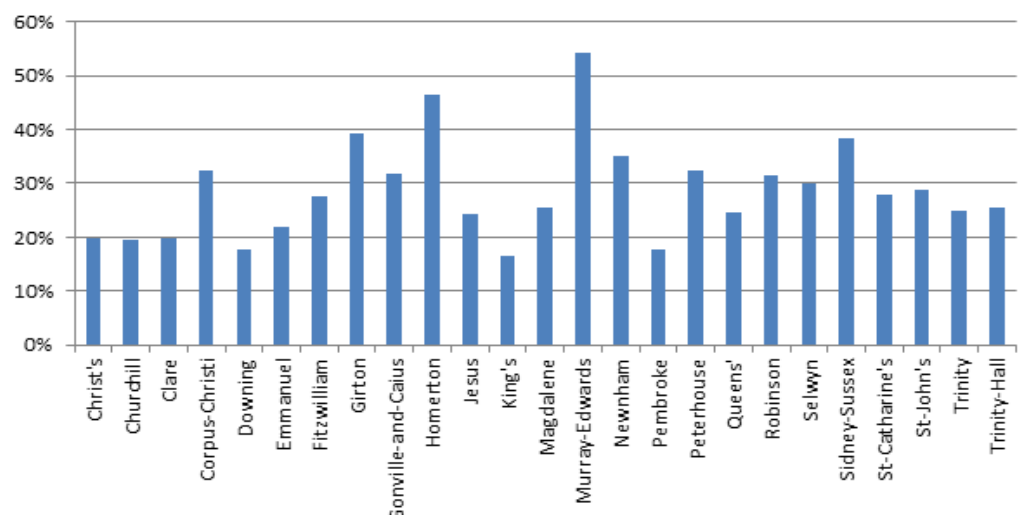
3. Polar

A common measure of the backgrounds of entrants to higher education is POLAR, a measure of historic rates of Higher Education participation in the student's home community.

Cambridge uses the POLAR2 'Quintile 1' measure, where students are from the 20% of areas with the lowest HE participation, adjusted academic attainment requirements. It is aiming for a target of 4.0% by 2016/17, and in 2013/14 had 3.6% of its students from those areas.¹² The Higher Education Statistics Authority's benchmark for Cambridge was to achieve 4.6% in 2013/14, so it continues to undershoot these targets

Oxford uses a different measure, but if we were to look at the same POLAR measure as for Cambridge, Oxford would have admitted just 2.4% of its intake from Q1 areas in 2013/14.¹³ It is worth noting this is not a target Oxford has set to drive performance, and so it may not be appropriate to judge their performance on this basis.

Fig 7: UK state school acceptance rate, by Cambridge College, 2012-2014. UK applicants excl. colleges accepting only mature students.



Oxford's figures for 2014 entry show that around 10.3% of accepted UK students came from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2, in contrast to the figure of 6.7% for 2012-13. Looking at ACORN, a measure which Oxford uses to set more access targets, around 9.3% of UK acceptances came from ACORN 4 & 5 areas, which house the poorest 40% of the population.

Application processes

Applications

The procedures for applying to Oxford and Cambridge vary, not just between the two institutions but sometimes also between different courses and different colleges. The majority of applicants to both universities are predicted to achieve top grades, and many also have excellent references. Therefore, the universities argue, it's not possible to select the best students based on their UCAS applications alone.

Both universities require an application by 15th October each year, which is significantly earlier than all other degree courses in the UK, apart from medicine, veterinary medicine/science and dentistry applications.

At Cambridge, in addition to the standard UCAS application an additional Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ) is required (giving more detail of AS points, topics covered and other information). Oxford requires no additional forms.

Applicants must choose a college to apply to, or submit an 'open' application. Applicants making open applications are allocated to a college which has received fewer applications per place in that subject than the average that year. Just 10% of UK applicants made an open application to Oxford in 2014, with just 6% at Cambridge in the same year. 90% of those making open applications at Cambridge were from state schools, and 75% were at Oxford.

Exams and other written work

Many applicants will also have to sit an additional exam, perhaps submit examples of written work or go through written problems when they attend interview, and this is where the greatest complexity is in

the process for those unfamiliar with the system. There are 11 different exams at Oxford and it might appear to a teacher or young person viewing the website that there are over 380 at Cambridge. In practice, the university says these can vary between being asked to read a set piece of text and discuss it, to maths problems and other written work.

Cambridge makes less use of external pre-interview exams than Oxford, but they are still required of some undergraduate applicants at both universities. AS Level results are currently used in addition to the information in an applicant's UCAS form, in deciding which applicants will be invited to interview but plans to decouple AS from A levels in schools have led to reports that these may be replaced by a new exam.¹⁴

At Cambridge, exams are mainly applied at a college level (although some subjects require applicants to sit an exam, regardless of college), and at Oxford it is the subject that mostly determines whether an exam is required. Many of these exams are independently marked and examined, such as the LNAT (the Law National Aptitude Test) and BMAT (BioMedical Admissions Test).

All Oxford-administered tests are free to UK applicants, and there are no penalties for late registration. The BMAT has an 'early bird discount' for those who register early, and there is also a BMAT hardship fund available for those students for whom the application cost may be a barrier.

As an example, for applications to study History at Cambridge, the table in the appendix sets out the requirements set by the different colleges for entrance in 2016. The full list of extra exams required at Oxford is given for each subject.

Some subjects and/or colleges also require students to submit examples of written work. These should be examples of ordinary schoolwork, marked by a teacher. Cambridge specifically says that submitted work should not be done specially for the admissions process, but should be marked work from the applicant's current courses.

Interviews

In addition to the application form(s), all applicants are required to be interviewed before being admitted. Oxford asks applicants for most of its courses to take a test as part of their application. Tutors then shortlist applicants based on students' applications and performance in the relevant test. For some courses the vast majority of applicants are invited to interview, but for some others as few as 30 per cent may be invited to interview.

There are also differences in the 'pool' systems at the two universities, mentioned earlier. This process is designed to help applicants who have applied to particularly over-subscribed colleges gain a place at another college, and also to ensure some standardisation between colleges in the quality of candidates. At Oxford, it is common to be interviewed by two or three colleges during the standard December interview period. At Cambridge, students may be invited back to Cambridge for an additional interview the following January. Roughly 20% of all offers made are through the pool system.

Candidates may be interviewed by two or more tutors at a time, each being an expert in some aspect of the degree course and with a connection to that college. The interview is designed to assess an applicant's academic abilities and potential. Both universities try to reassure applicants that interviews are standardised as much as possible, and that the only thing they are testing is the candidate's academic potential.

A focus on access

Given the challenges these universities face in ensuring fair access, both are acutely aware of the need to choose the best students they can, regardless of background. This means both encouraging the brightest students to apply, and also ensuring fairness throughout the application process.

All publicly-funded higher education institutions in England that charge tuition fees of more than £6,000 must have an 'access agreement' with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). In these agreements, the universities set out how they will improve efforts to ensure fair access for applicants, regardless of background, and how they will track their progress.

Oxford and Cambridge combined will spend an estimated £15.7million on access and outreach measures in 2016-17. This covers a range of programmes and bursaries – from residential summer schools and teacher summer schools, many sponsored by the Sutton Trust, to open days and more intensive programmes over a number of years. Individual colleges also undertake their own outreach work.

Oxford and Cambridge both also have significant financial support structures in place to help students who may have financial difficulties while studying. There are significant bursary programmes in place across the universities, but in many cases the support available can vary between colleges and subjects, and in some cases the full range of support available will not be clear until the applicant has received an offer or, indeed, has taken up their place. The collegiate system, while channelling significant amounts of financial support, creates significant complexity. Both universities do not allow their students to have term-time employment.

Oxford University

Each year the collegiate University delivers more than 3,000 outreach events with 72% of all UK schools with a sixth form. Activities include:

- o Provision of information for students and their advisers, including an Admissions Information Centre offering personalised advice;
- o Delivery of activities such as the UNIQ summer schools, with almost 900 students attending each year, regional teacher conferences and student conferences across the UK;
- o The Oxford Pathways Programme, in partnership with the Sutton Trust, for highly able pupils starting in year 10;
- o A link college for every school in the UK as a first point of contact for visits to Oxford or from outreach staff (Scottish schools are linked to a University team of outreach staff).
- o And from 2016, Teacher Summer Schools, in partnership with the Sutton Trust, will offer teachers from UK state schools the opportunity to develop their understanding of high quality subject-specific enrichment for highly-able students.
- o The university spends more than £5.6m on outreach work and a further £7m on financial support for students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Cambridge University

Hundreds of outreach initiatives and events are run each year, both in Cambridge and in schools and colleges across the UK. These initiatives include:

- o Sutton Trust Summer Schools Free subject-specific residential courses for Year 12 (or equivalent) students studying at state-maintained schools in the UK. The five-day summer schools in July and August allow students to explore their interest in one of 26 subject courses and gain an insight into what it is like to live and study as a first-year undergraduate student at Cambridge.
- o Teacher Summer Schools, in partnership with the Sutton Trust, offer teachers from UK state-maintained sector schools and colleges the opportunity to develop their understanding of high quality subject-specific enrichment for highly-able students, in order to support strong applications to top universities
- o Challenge Days - Large-scale day events designed to offer a taste of higher education to students in Year 10. The days involve introductory sessions on higher education and Cambridge.
- o HE+ - A collaborative project being piloted by the University of Cambridge and its Colleges, working together with groups of state schools and colleges in fourteen regions of the UK.
- o Insight - An academic programme which aims develop the students' interests and tackle the barriers many students face when applying to university.
- o Experience Cambridge - this programme works with up to 1000 students in subjects where we receive considerably more Summer School applications than places.

Recommendations

1. Oxford and Cambridge should each standardise their admissions processes across subjects and colleges as much as practically possible, to help students and teachers who are unfamiliar with the process

Both universities evaluate many different aspects of a prospective student's application in great detail. But this means that there is significant complexity in the admissions system to both universities which can seem off-putting to students unfamiliar with the process who may have little support from their schools. Although both universities do put significant effort into explaining the processes on their websites and literature, having similar processes across both universities would help teachers and schools unfamiliar with the systems. Our polling showed that many state school teachers are reluctant to encourage bright students to apply.

Schools that send very few, or no, students to Oxbridge may be discouraged from applying by the complexities in the admissions process – including the bespoke exams, interviews and the early application deadline. While recognising the arguments the universities make to defend these practices – and the possibility that exists for 'open applications' – we believe that selection should take place at a subject level. This change would need to be done with caution to ensure that the process continues to flag the individual circumstances in any given application.

2. The restriction that students are only allowed to apply to either Oxford or Cambridge universities should be reviewed, and further information on the access implications gathered

It's unclear why there should be special arrangements for the two universities and no others, particularly when some courses at other universities are similarly over-subscribed. The universities argue there would be logistical difficulties in having a robust interview process if much higher numbers of applications were received and that the degrees offered by the two institutions are so different that most candidates shouldn't be applying for them at both universities in any case. This is an area where further consideration is required.

3. Both universities should review their approaches to any additional exams applicants are required to sit and their approaches to interviews, to ensure they are as fair, consistent and transparent as possible

The exams set in addition to an applicant's A-levels and GCSEs place extra burdens on applicants, not least as preparation courses available to Oxbridge applicants favour those with the means to pay for them. These courses create an extra barrier for admissions tutors to try to see past, and both universities should ensure that they do everything possible within their power to ensure the application process is looking for academic potential, not just testing those who are best coached.

There is obviously a strong incentive for the universities to ensure their exams identify talent where it exists. However, both universities should also review their approaches to any additional exams applicants are required to sit to ensure they are genuinely useful, are properly calibrated, and are not adding an additional 'access' deterrent. These should be streamlined, and standardised, between colleges and subjects as much as practically possible. Evidence on how candidates from different backgrounds perform in these tests should be published.

Interviews can be intimidating for young people, not least to those who have not had significant preparation and support to prepare. The goal is to uncover academic potential, and this should and could be done more explicitly at a university-wide level. Both universities should review their approaches to interviews to ensure they are not adding an additional 'access' deterrent. These should be streamlined – and standardised – between colleges and subjects as much as practically possible. Sufficient training should be given to all interviewers, regardless of their experience, to ensure this standardisation is implemented fully.

There is also a concern that, as with any interview, unconscious bias may play a role in some decisions. The Equality Challenge Unit suggests that these biases are "influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences... These associations are difficult to override, regardless of whether we recognise them to be wrong, because they are deeply ingrained into our thinking and emotions."¹⁷ All interviewers should have training to reduce the impacts of unconscious bias, not just new interviewers.

4. Both universities should review their use of contextual admissions

A benchmark approach should be used so that disadvantaged applicants, for example those eligible for the pupil premium, could be admitted on an academic threshold related to what is required to be successful on the course for which they have applied. This may not be the same grade requirements as they are at the moment, which will be partly driven by the over-subscription of candidates.

Universities, and individual colleges, should be credited for the learning progress that their students make, not just final degree classifications. External 'league tables' should not penalise good colleges for using contextual admissions, as would be the case at the moment in the Norrington Table at Oxford and the Tompkins Table at Cambridge.

5. All universities, including Oxford and Cambridge and their constituent colleges, should more rigorously evaluate their outreach activities using comparison and control groups. The Government should support the scale-up of those outreach projects that have robust evidence of impact

Both universities undertake significant amounts of outreach work, much of which is aimed at students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Exploiting the research expertise these universities have outreach activities, including those undertaken by individual colleges, should be rigorously evaluated and best practice should be shared widely.

6. The universities, and the individual colleges, should do more to publicise clearly the generous amount of financial support available before students apply, to applicants and their schools

The cost of attending university is well-publicised, but the financial support available to students is often less clear. The universities, and in particular individual colleges, should publicise clearly the financial support available before students apply through a single, easily accessible portal. Although the conditions for particular sources of funding can be specific and complex, it is important that applicants have access to this information before they make an application, not after they have been offered a place.

7. Both universities should provide travel passes to applicants from non-privileged homes

Both universities should also consider providing a standard offer to all applicants from non-privileged homes of travel passes to attend interviews, to ensure no students are deterred by cost. Other universities requiring interviews should also do the same.

8. The government should strengthen the national careers service, ensuring that schools and colleges have access to registered professional advisers with specialist and up-to-date knowledge of entry requirements to elite universities

Over 40% of teachers in state secondary schools say they would rarely or never advise academically-gifted pupils to apply to Oxbridge. The government, and the universities, should focus on how to dispel the myths that persist around Oxbridge, and explain the application processes clearly, so that applicants from state schools get the encouragement and support necessary. This is particularly important for schools that do not send many students on to Oxbridge, and for whom these myths and misunderstandings may be most problematic.

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Table 1: Oxford University – extra tests required by subject for 2016 entrance

Archaeology and Anthropology	You do not need to take a written test when you apply for this course.
Biochemistry	You do not need to take a written test when you apply for this course.
Biological Sciences	You do not need to take a written test when you apply for this course.
Biomedical Sciences	All applicants must take the Biomedical Admissions Test (BMAT). There is a reduced entrance fee if you register before 1 October.
Chemistry	You do not need to take a written test when you apply for this course.
Classical Archaeology and Ancient History	You do not need to take a written test when you apply for this course.
Classics	<p>All candidates must take the Classics Admissions Test (CAT). This test is in three parts: the Latin test, the Greek test and the Classics Language Aptitude Test.</p> <p>Candidates who are studying Latin or Greek to A-level or equivalent (those applying for Course I) must take the test(s) in the language(s) you are studying.</p> <p>Candidates who are studying neither Latin nor Greek to A-level or equivalent (those applying for Course II) must take the Classics Language Aptitude Test.</p>
Classics and English	Candidates must take the Classics Admissions Test (CAT) AND the English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT). Please note that separate registration is required for each of the two tests.
Classics and Modern Languages	Candidates must take the Classics Admissions Test (CAT) AND the Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT). Please note that separate registration is required for each of the two tests.
Classics and Oriental Studies	<p>All candidates must take the Classics Admissions Test (CAT). For details please see the separate entry for Classics.</p> <p>Candidates intending to study Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew, or Persian must always take 'Part B' of the CAT (in addition to any other parts required), which is a test of language aptitude.</p>
Computer Science	All candidates must take the Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT).
Computer Science and Philosophy	All candidates must take the Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT).
Earth Sciences (Geology)	You do not need to take a written test when you apply for this course.
Economics and Management (E&M)	All candidates must take the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA).
Engineering Science	All candidates for all Engineering courses must take the Physics Aptitude Test (PAT).

English and Modern Languages	All candidates must take the Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT) AND the English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT). Please note that separate registration is required for each of the two tests.
English Language and Literature	All candidates must take the English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT).
European and Middle Eastern Languages (EMEL)	All candidates will need to take both the Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT) AND the Oriental Languages Aptitude Test (OLAT). Separate registration is required for each of the two tests.
Fine Art	Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview, which will include a practical test. Candidates will be asked to complete two pieces in a variety of media from a number of possible subjects. Candidates themselves do not need to make any special arrangements for the test, as this will be organised for them by their college.
Geography	All candidates must take the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA).
History	All candidates must take the History Aptitude Test (HAT).
History (Ancient and Modern)	All candidates must take the History Aptitude Test (HAT). For further information, please see the separate entry for History.
History and Economics (HECO)	All candidates must take the History Aptitude Test (HAT), as for History. This will include a question specifically for HECO candidates.
History and English	All candidates must take the History Aptitude Test (HAT), as for History. Please note that candidates for History and English are NOT required to take the English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT).
History and Modern Languages	Candidates must take the History Aptitude Test (HAT) AND the Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT). Separate registration is required for each of the two tests.
History and Politics	All candidates must take the History Aptitude Test (HAT).
History of Art	You do not need to take a written test when you apply for this course.
Human Sciences	For this first time this year, all candidates must take the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA).
Law (Jurisprudence) and Law with Law Studies in Europe	All candidates must take the Law National Admissions Test (LNAT). Candidates for Law with Law Studies in Europe who are applying for the French, German, Italian or Spanish Law options may be given an oral test in the relevant European language in December if they are shortlisted for interview.
Materials Science	All candidates must take the Physics Aptitude Test (PAT).

Mathematics	All candidates must take the Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT).
Mathematics and Computer Science	All candidates must take the Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT).
Mathematics and Philosophy	All candidates must take the Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT).
Mathematics and Statistics	All candidates must take the Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT).
Medicine	All applicants must take the Biomedical Admissions Test (BMAT). There is a reduced entrance fee if you register before 1 October.
Modern Languages	All candidates must take the Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT). This test is a booklet containing several different papers: please check to see which papers are required for your course.
Modern Languages and Linguistics	All candidates must take the Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT). This test is a booklet containing several different papers: please check to see which papers are required for your course.
Music	Shortlisted candidates will be asked to take a practical test in December.
Oriental Studies	Candidates for course combinations which include Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew and Persian will need to take the Oriental Languages Aptitude Test (OLAT).
Philosophy and Modern Languages	All candidates must take the Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT).
Philosophy and Theology	All candidates must take the Philosophy Test.
Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)	All candidates must take the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA).
Physics	All candidates must take the Physics Aptitude Test (PAT). Please note that the format of PAT has been changed this year: section A (Mathematics for Physics) remains unchanged but the multiple choice questions and long problems in section B (Physics) have been eliminated. Section B will now be made up of shorter physics questions worth a maximum of 9 marks each. Candidates are urged to plan their time appropriately and attempt all the questions on the paper.
Physics and Philosophy	All candidates must take the Physics Aptitude Test (PAT).

<p>Psychology (Experimental)</p> <p>Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics</p>	<p>All candidates must take the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA).</p> <p>Candidates for courses including Linguistics (Psychology and Linguistics, Philosophy and Linguistics) must also take the Linguistics Test. This is part of the Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT). Please see Modern Languages above.</p>
<p>Theology and Religion</p>	<p>You do not need to take a written test when you apply for this course.</p>
<p>Theology and Oriental Studies</p>	<p>Candidates applying to the Judaism and Islam strands, intending to study Hebrew, Arabic, Persian or Turkish, are required to take the Oriental Languages Aptitude Test (OLAT); candidates for the Buddhism, Hinduism and Eastern Christianity strands do not have to sit a written test.</p>

As an example, for applications to study History at Cambridge, the table below sets out the requirements set by the different colleges for entrance in 2016.

Table 2: History entrance requirements and interview/tests by college

College	Assessment of applicant for this subject
Christ's	School/college essays; College-set study/reading at interview
Churchill	School/college essays; College-set study/reading at interview
Clare	School/college essays; College-set study/reading at interview
Corpus Christi	School/college essay; College-set study/reading at interview; College test at interview
Downing	School/college essay; College-set study/reading at interview
Emmanuel	School/college essays; College-set study/reading before interview
Fitzwilliam	School/college essay; College-set study/reading at interview
Girton	School/college essays; College-set study/reading at interview
Gonville & Caius	School/college essays; College-set study/reading at interview
Homerton	School/college essay; College-set study/reading at interview
Hughes Hall	College test at interview
Jesus	School/college essay; College test at interview
King's	School/college essays
Lucy Cavendish	School/college essays; College-set study/reading before interview; College test at interview
Magdalene	School/college essays
Murray Edwards	School/college essay; College-set study/reading at interview
Newnham	School/college essays; College-set study/reading at interview; College test at interview
Pembroke	School/college essay; College-set study/reading at interview; College test at interview
Peterhouse	School/college essays; College-set study/reading at interview; College test at interview
Queens'	School/college essays; College-set study/reading at interview
Robinson	School/college essay; College-set study/reading at interview; College test at interview
St Catharine's	School/college essay; College-set study/reading at interview
St Edmund's	School/college essays; College test at interview
St John's	School/college essays; One-and-a-half hour timed essay at interview
Selwyn	School/college essay; College-set study/reading at interview
Sidney Sussex	'School/college essays; College-set study/reading before interview; College test at interview
Trinity	School/college essay; College-set study/reading at interview
Trinity Hall	School/college essays
Wolfson	School/college essay; College test at interview